

ON THE QUESTION OF UNITY IN PUERTO RICO



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the first time in the history of the world, the people of the United States have been called upon to make a choice between two political parties.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Theodore Roosevelt, the man who has been chosen by the people of the United States to be their President, is a man of great energy and power.

He is a man who has been called upon to make a choice between two political parties.

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THEODORE ROOSEVELT

(1890)

INDEPENDENTIST UNITY
BY JUAN ANTONIO CORRETJER

TAKEN FROM THE NEWSPAPER "EL NUEVO DIA" OF PUERTO RICO, OCTOBER 17, 1979.

The substantial complexity of the Puerto Rican situation, both internal and international, has made itself more apparent since the beginning of September. The precipitating factor is the return of the Nationalist heroes. Of immediate visibility in the depths are the reasons that forced Mr. Carter to dictate their release. In the very midst of the event, we pointed out how the two forces coinciding in the rupture of the imperialists' will were Puerto Rican: the politico-military activity of the FALN (Armed Forces of National Liberation), combatants in the yanki rearguard; and the National Committee to Free the Nationalist Prisoners in Puerto Rico. These two organizations: one military, revolutionary and clandestine; the other legal, public and diligent, the instruments of Puerto Rican persuasion; that were able to mobilize, at a degree of togetherness never before seen among us, public opinion inside and outside of Puerto Rico until the delight of victory.

Within the explosion of popular jubilation that accompanies our heroes from Chicago to Puerto Rico via New York, a political proposal is in consequence produced. The excarcerated heroes reaffirm the necessity of independentist unity. A young journalist asked me at the airport, shortly before their arrival, what group of independentists, the PSP or the PIP, they would join on their return. My answer disillusioned the reporter: "I believe," I said, "that it will be the Nationalist Party, which is their party."

What was a spontaneous response to that question jelled quickly in reality. The struggle for independentist unity is the principal point of our task. Imperialism combats it with all its resources. It is necessary to see this struggle as part of the struggle against imperialism. So seen, we can place it

within the liberating process. And it is a process which develops within the very entrails of the struggle for independence. Within this unifying process, the first thing that is necessary, in order for the conduct of the heroes to gather strength, is that the struggle achieve its party. Moral force must be transformed into political force. Supposing that unification is proposed in terms of alliances, the political factor that gives it birth is naturally very important.

But if what is being proposed is not an alliance of existing factors, but rather the unification of the independentist people in a non-partisan (non-sectarian) movement, then an analysis of importance in the case of an alliance weighs even more heavily in the popular proposal: that of the factors of disunity.

It has been said that socialism divides the independentists. Unfortunately, it is not so. The reader should not be astonished by this shocking adverb. If what divides the independentists were only a philosophical question, this fact would signify such a high level of development and advancement in the independence movement that it would be in itself, with all the gravity that the ideological division puts forward, something encouraging. Such is not the case with the division in independentism. The cause is at a more elementary level.

What divides us are the elections. It was for this purpose that the intervening government installed the electoral regime. Remember the supplementary instructions given to General Miles for the invasion of Puerto Rico, and the later advice by Henna to Munoz Rivera and Barbosa to penetrate to its depths the divisive character of the elections. I won't harp on the theme. The reality is apparent. Elections as something divisive among the independentists manifests itself: electionists and anti-electoralists on each side; electionist against electionists in the case of the PSP and the PIP.

At the same time that the Nationalist heroes set foot in their homeland, repression is heightened. Imperialism, harassed internationally, retaliates for the defeat inflicted on it by the UN and the Non-Aligned Nations Conference in

solidarity with independence of Puerto Rico. This intention of the US manifests itself in a very curious manner in the jailing of Juan Mari Bras. Who wins in the case? The PSP plays its cards to win prestige: the Conference in Solidarity with the Independence of Puerto Rico in Mexico awaits it in the beginning of November. Imperialism plays its card: it grossly challenges the UN and the Non-Aligned, jailing the Puerto Rican leader these organizations see as representative of Puerto Rico. The repressive apparatus against Puerto Rico shoots deeper: it intends to reduce the alleviating influence that international agreements in favor of independence produce in Puerto Rico.

The US, forced to cede territory to Panama, reaffirms its military power in Puerto Rico. Such a military maxim, because of the imperialist nature of the conduct, converts itself into a political maneuver, and in the long run is useless. In Puerto Rico, it reaffirms itself upon the land, without amounting to lose population? This act reveals the imperialist self-satisfaction conceit in Puerto Rico, and under cover of the deification, its fears. Vieques proves this.

What does Washington fear in Puerto Rico? The people. With its investigative resources the despots of the Pentagon know quite well that the Puerto Rican left counts at a minimum on one hundred thousand people, that neither recognize nor militate within the electoral parties. They are militants, in only the smallest portion, in the anti-electoral organizations. In its immense majority it is dispersed, but not disunited. It waits to be organized.

Neither the PIP nor the PSP can develop themselves to a liberating level of efficacy. The legal apparatus in which they are ingrained prohibits it. It impedes their growth. The great mass of the left, with its one hundred thousand anticipants, will move Puerto Rico in favor of itself and the world in favor of Puerto Rico, when an armed revolutionary movement, organized with wisdom, with scientific rigor, and at the hour of audacity, limitless audacity, dynamizes it, inspires it and leads it into combat from the skillful depths of clandestinity.

SPEECH IN JAYUYA OCTOBER 30 1979 by JOSE LOPEZ-
GENERAL COORDINATOR MOVIMIENTO DE LIBERA-
CION NACIONAL (MLN)

Comrades,

We would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our loyalty and commitment to the national heroes who are present (Lolita Lebron, Oscar Collazo, Rafael Cancel Miranda and Irvin Flores); to Andres, Grisolio, Carlos, and the rest of the patriots who with their revolutionary spirit make their presence; felt as the compatriots, who today, following the revolutionary Albizuista trajectory and giving it a new direction with the great science and experience of Marxism/Leninism, which nurtures their thoughts, wage war against the yanki empire - I refer specifically to the combatants of the FALN, the FARP, the Macheteros, the Organization of Volunteers of the Puerto Rican Revolution and the Comandos Revolucionarios del Pueblo; and also to our prisoners of war and political prisoners: Nydia, Pablo, Angel, Ismael, Pedro and Diego.

Compatriots - It has been two years since our organization, the Movimiento de Liberacion Nacional (MLN) put forward that Puerto Rico was on the threshold of revolution and that this stage called for the launching of armed struggle, for the intensification of mass struggle channeled through the revolutionary road, and for making independentism take root in the boricua barrios of the U.S. in order to develop a rear-guard capable of dealing blows to the enemy within its own entrails.

Today the necessary conditions to realize these stated objectives are crystallizing. We are witnesses to the upsurge of several politico-military centers; to the existence of an economic and political crisis in the colony and the metropole alike; to the development of a mass movement capable of complying with the exigencies of the revolution - as was the movement for the excarceration of the Nationalist heroes, and as is the movement to rescue Vieques from the clutches of the US Navy; and to a rearguard that counts on a political and military capacity.

Within this sum-up of the objective conditions we must recognize that there exists a great Puerto Rican mass of 100,000 people: who, as Comrade Juan Antonio Corretjer recently put forward in an article entitled Independentist Unity, "neither recognize nor struggle within, the electoral parties. They are only in the smallest portion, militants in the anti-electoral organization. In their immense majority they are dispersed, but not disunified. They wait to be organized."

Compatriots - this is the challenge confronting us; as Patriot Oscar Collazo said in Chicago, "The independentist people are united, those who are not are the leaders." The reason is obvious and is found in the proposition of Jose Marti: "At times the man is ready and the people are not ready; at times, the people are ready and the man does not appear." That which applies to our situation is the latter assertion - the people are ready, the conditions exist, the leadership is not there. The moment does not call for a messiah; it clamors for a conscious and valiant leadership, disposed to leave aside foolishness and mechanistic presumptions; disposed to lead the people to shatter the colonial structures and make the administration of the colony impossible. The mechanism par excellence for this is the National Liberation Front. Already the clandestine organizations have initiated this process, responding to the call of our national heroes; it is for us to carry it forward.

As a first step to unity, the Patriot Oscar Collazo wrote us in a letter, "A suggestion on my part would be to give special attention to the following matters:

1. Freedom for Nydia and Pablo and for the prisoners of the Vieques case.
2. Total and decisive support for the struggle of the Viequenses to drive the Navy from their beloved island.
3. A strong campaign in favor of unification as a first step toward the decisive battle for the liberation of Puerto Rico."

I believe that tactically all independentists would be in accord with the first two points. The third is the one that must be scrutinized, that must be studied.

Even if we don't like it, it is a reality as pointed out by

Comrade Juan Antonio Corretjer, and as analyzed more than 40 years ago by the greatest Puerto Rican revolutionary of our century, Don Pedro Albizu Campos that "that which divides us is the elections. For this the intervening government installed the electoral regime."

Compatriots – we must be clear that the only thing the elections do is give another turn to the treadmill of colonial life. We, as independentists, are not for this. We are for establishing the Puerto Rican republic, and to obtain this goal requires something more, as Albizu said, "in order to be attended Puerto Rico must put forward a grave crisis in the colonial administration."

We understand clearly that to bring about this crisis, strategic unity is necessary. Strategic unity, contrary to tactical unity, requires in our case an alliance based on anti-imperialist principles.

This is the task of the current moment – the development of an anti-imperialist front. Are we at a height to respond to the clarion of this precious moment? This would be the best offering that we could place on the graves of the martyrs of Jayuya; the best homage that we could render to the Nationalist heroes; the best debt that we could pay to our struggling people; the best manifestation of loyalty to our brave silent guerrilleros.

It would be fine to leave Jayuya with a pact of anti-imperialist unity, following the example that has come to us from clandestinity.

Among many things that our Nationalist heroes teach us is that La Patria must be forged in struggle, in sacrifice and valor. They teach us that there is no task too difficult if what is at stake is the future of the fatherland.

Are we disposed to follow their example, to give up our sterile debates, fratricidal struggle, personal attacks, corrosive individualism? Are we disposed to organize the independentist masses, cost what it will?

Mao Tse Tung the great Chinese revolutionary liked to recount the following fable of the foolish old man who removed

mountains, and I would like to end with the message that it carries.

There is an ancient Chinese fable about the foolish old man who moved mountains. It tells of an old man who lived in the North of China a long, long time ago, and who was known as the Foolish Old Man of the northern mountains.

The front of his home faced south and in front the entrance were two high mountain peaks, Taijang and Wangai, that obstructed the pass. Therefore the Old Man with great determination, aided by his sons shovel in hand, began excavating these mountains. There was another old man also, known as the Wise Old Man, and on seeing them digging. He said laughingly, "What foolishness for you to be doing this. It's nearly impossible for you to excavate these two great mountains."

The foolish old man replied, "When I die my sons will continue, and so when they die, there will then be their sons and then the sons of their sons til eternity. As these mountains cannot grow more, and with each shovel that we fill they are lower, why can't we eliminate them?" Then, having answered the point voiced by the Wise Old Man, he continued digging every day, with unquenchable conviction. So God was moved to have mercy on him and sent two angels that carried the mountains off on their backs.

Today, we have two mountains that weigh like death on the Puerto Rican people—yankee imperialism in Puerto Rico and capitalism—that the Puerto Rican independence movement has decided to dig up. We must persevere and work incessantly, and also we will reach the heart of God, who in this case are the masses of Puerto Rican people. If they are firm and dig together with us, what could make it impossible for us to remove these two mountains?

THE NEW OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE CONDITIONS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR PUERTO RICAN INDEPENDENCE

I. Historic transformation

The colonial accord of the ELA to which the yanki capitalists and a sector of the Puerto Rican 'comprador' bourgeoisie arrived in 1937 was a decisive step towards the new political situation of present day Puerto Rico. At that time, the dual US strategy of repression and agreements (reforms) produced the jailing of all the important leadership of the Puerto Rican independence struggle. The leaders of the Nationalist Party were sent to prison; including the president, Don Pedro Albizu Campos and the Secretary-General Juan Antonio Corretjer. The period culminated in the massacres of Ponce and Rio Piedras. It was marked by the heroic gestures of Rosado and Beauchamp and of Antongiorgi, and the telephone and cane workers' strikes.

On the other hand, the repression against the communists, the labor unions and the patriotic cultural institutions also recurred, culminating with the intimidation of the Puerto Rican Communist Party and the division of the CGT (until then the largest union in the country), in 1946.

The second part of the yanki strategy was that of cultivating the collaborationist elements in Puerto Rican society and politics. Here they established contacts with the 'comprador' bourgeoisie and together planned the future of Puerto Rico for thirty years.

The importance that the US then gave to Puerto Rico has grown in the ensuing years. For economic reasons, the US looked at Puerto Rico in 1938 as a great captive market for its production. For military reasons, they looked on Puerto Rico as an important base for their naval defense during World War II, and later as a base of military aggression in the Caribbean and Central America to impose their hegemonic designs in that area.

With the capitalist decline of the present, marked by the loss of control over the world's raw materials, the economic and technological demands of the Third World, and the loss of economic and political equilibrium in Europe, Japan and even the US itself, the Yanki capitalists are intensifying their exploitation of their own North American workers and look with hungry new eyes on the mineral riches of the Puerto Rican sub-soil.

The ELA strategy served the yankis well for the epoch when it was necessary to stabilize the colonial situation in Puerto Rico. But already by the present decade the crisis of capitalism required a new strategy that would permit the exploitation of the Puerto Rican subsoil. This new situation was initiated in 1976 and we call it annexationism.

If the statehood movement in Puerto Rico could be characterized in times past by the petitions and the yanki tutelage of the old latifundists (big landowners) like Luis A. Ferre, the Garcia Mendez family, the Calafs and other naive politicians like Martinez Nadal, Celso Barbosa and Santiago Iglesias Pantin; then the new annexationism represents the total absorption of Puerto Rico within the Yanki federal system, thereby assuring absolute legalized control over Puerto Rico's raw materials—its natural resources, labor and consumer market. Annexationism is the disappearance of the Puerto Rican nationality and the genocide of its people.

The sons of the old latifundists, are now converted into the 'comprador' bourgeoisie by virtue of the transformation of Puerto Rico from the old agricultural economy to an industrial one; the stateholders of before are now the annexationist par excellence.

They propose to expand their capital and make their puppets rich, as are the members of the fascist-annexationist clique of Carlos Romero Barcelo. They hope to achieve this with statehood for Puerto Rico.

The new strategy was put in motion with the victory of Romero Barcelo in 1976, abandoning the stance of petitioning, for (actual) control. Legislative and representative control was estab-

blished in local economics and politics. They then set out on a politics of repression against the worker, student, and revolutionary independence sectors, and thereby served notice on the opportunist and petty-bourgeois independentists to accept the new rules of the game. That is, accept the electoral system as the form of opposition and stop revolutionary militance.

In exchange, the annexationist propose to take power in all the institutions of the country in a systematic way, from the Puerto Rican Cultural Institute and the Ateneo Puertorriqueño to the Bar Association and the small US Democratic and Republican parties in Puerto Rico, transforming the latter into organizations of power within the yanki political process and into an annexationist advance in the US. Actually, they propose to do the same in the US, with the Puerto Rican institutions of the barrio. They are presently engaged in this process.

II. The two faces of annexationism

Present day annexationism has two faces. The principal one at the moment is the PNP. This tendency, fascist in its practice and annexationist in its ideology, has put into motion a series of events that together represent the greatest danger to Puerto Rican national life. Cerro Maravilla and the assassination of worker and independence leaders. The arrests of the Vieques 21 and workers on strike. The militarization of the police and the National Guard to the level of counter-insurgency. Political and economic ties with the most reactionary sectors of yanki capitalism. All these point to a politics of violence and repression and of popular and political consolidation that will bring Puerto Rico to statehood in the decade of the 80's.

So strong is the annexationist thrust of the PNP, that the PPD is crumbling as a center of political equilibrium in the historical evolution of the country.

If indeed the PNP is the motor of annexationism in Puerto Rico, the Democratic and Republican Parties are grooming themselves as the political parties that will replace the tradition-

al statehood and popular colonial parties. The push in this direction was given by annexationism, but pro-commonwealth forces followed close along. In 1980, for example, not only the PNP but also the PPD propose to endorse two opposing candidates in the yanki Democratic Party primaries. The PNP remains sold to Carter, who favors statehood. The PPD is pushing Kennedy, who has promised to endorse ELA anew. The important struggle doubtless will be between the PPD and the PNP for control of the Democratic presidential primaries and the machinery of the ADA. It's perfectly logical that at the end of the contest, with Kennedy winning the yanki presidency, the PPD will remain in control of the Democratic Party machinery in Puerto Rico, and the PNP of the Republican. In any case, both developments would be a great step towards annexationism in Puerto Rico, and it would be a matter of a short time before both yanki parties substitute for the homegrown colonial parties.

The consolidation of the annexationist line in Puerto Rico in the first half of the 80's will create serious problems for independentism. The independentist reformism of the PIP will be converted into the only Puerto Rican electoral line, with the tendency of maintaining the independentist masses within the party process. This would maintain great sectors within a sterile struggle without any future for the triumph of desires for liberty.

On the other hand, the annexationist consolidation will oblige the PSP to make a new definition or a re-definition of its strategy of struggle, seriously threatening its very existence as a party if it chooses to maintain its vacillating and electoral role.

The revolutionary forces, on the other hand, are confronted with an unprecedented challenge to organizing and action. The struggle against the annexationist process, against national alienation and destruction, for a cultural reaffirmation, against the military occupation, against repression and for the freedom of our POW'S; must set the level of the organization of the masses and the armed struggle. This struggle must manifest itself at growing levels that correspond to the annexationist offensive. It must be set out not only in Puerto Rico but also in the US.

In this last case, across the yanki national territory. The revolutionary forces represent the only forces capable of resolving the contest in favor of independence.

III. THE REVOLUTIONARY OFFENSIVE

We have put forward that the revolutionary forces are the determining factor in the struggle between independentism and annexationism. If indeed annexationism represents the aspirations of yanki capitalism and of the home-grown annexationists to legalize in permanent form the structure of yanki politics in Puerto Rico, and by the same token their hunger for our natural resources and labor; then the revolutionary forces represent national salvation.

Not only the annexationists but also the independentists find ourselves in the final stages of an 82-year struggle. We both understand that the measures we are taking represent the final ones to take in the maneuvers to resolve the question of status. We both recognize, pronouncements to the contrary notwithstanding, that the decision between statehood and independence has an irrevocable character. We both know perfectly well that the balance of forces favors them for the moment and that the revolutionary Puerto Rican left is still very fragile.

However, in the development of annexationist tactics, the revolutionary patriotic sectors will necessarily broaden themselves and pro-independence militance will inevitable rise to higher levels of action.

If the annexationists in fact count on the repressive forces, revolutionary independentism counts on organizational forms to deter this repression. This is not enough! It's not enough to adopt clandestine structures, because it is not enough to survive the repression. It is necessary to survive, yes! But also it's necessary to advance in organization, in the capacity to give direction to the masses and to multiply the fronts of struggle; necessary to develop a militant and constant initiative. The initiative of the struggle always rests in our hands, and we must put the annexationists on the defensive.

Annexationism, with all its power and machinery, has feet of clay. In truth it can be seen as the final attempt of a colonialist option that is wasting away in the face of the political and economic reality of our times.

But we must struggle fiercely against annexationism. We must put it to death with the greatest rapidity, and thus leave the yanki colonialism with the only option it would have—to retire from Puerto Rico.

When comrade and teacher Juan Antonio Corretjer and the LSP point out that the unity necessary as a first step to independentist victory can only be taken in clandestinity and at a revolutionary level, they are completely correct. Unity cannot be had simply for the sake of unity. Unity comes with the proposition of consolidating political lines. For that reason, the unity of clandestinity and of the anti-annexationist and liberating clandestine political line, is the key to the elaboration of a strategy of struggle that liquidates annexationism. Electoralists and anti-electoralists cannot unite. Reformists and revolutionaries cannot unite. Protagonists and opponents of armed struggle cannot unite. However much we desire unity, broad unity, our unity consequently cannot be shot through with contradictions in its breast like those we have enumerated. One must have beforehand fundamental tactical unity to make strategic unity possible. The rest is a dream of good wishes.

Where then is unity? Unity is in the clandestine organizations, that are already in a process of tactical unity. These groups, even when small at present, carry in their bosom the seed of a higher unity, that can transform them into a single clandestine armed organization, capable in its turn of organizing the structural advances to give a revolutionary and consequential leadership to the masses—mass struggle and armed struggle, a unitary political military structure, anti-imperialist strategy and tactics directed at destroying the annexationist will and maneuvers.

A project of such breadth will drag the reformists and opportunists in the direction of a great final confrontation. It will guarantee us the victory.

IV. KEY CONJUNCTURES

Puerto Rican clandestinity has already given the signal that it understands perfectly the new objective and subjective conditions in Puerto Rico. In recent pronouncements and actions they have focussed on the key conjunctures of the new struggle. These are:

1. The struggle against the yanki military presence in Vieques and the whole Puerto Rican national territory.
2. The struggle against the annexationist primaries and the consolidation of power over Puerto Rican institutions.
3. The struggle against repression.
4. The struggle to free our political prisoners and prisoners of war.
5. The struggle for the transformation of the independence movement into an anti-imperialist and militant movement.

We have said on many occasions that the decade of the 80's will be a decisive decade in the struggle for national liberation. With the passage of time this prediction is being converted more and more into reality. Not only the annexationists but also the independentists are doing everything to advance the final and decisive confrontation. Before this push from the left and the right, the center is crumbling. The designs for maintaining the status quo are disintegrating. Opportunism and reformism are going to be weakening. The yanki desire for a definitive resolution of the status of Puerto Rico is developing.

The fundamental problem of the present is that the yanki wish for annexation corresponds to the maintenance of local colonial power for the homegrown annexationists. To destroy these latter is to destroy the foreigners. To destroy them both, it will be necessary to intensify the struggle on all levels previously mentioned, using the mechanisms previously elaborated, well-defined by a comprehensive strategy and put into practice through practical, effective tactics. Let's get to it!



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